

Unintentional Injuries, Violence, and the Health of Young People

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Division of Adolescent and School Health

Unintentional Injuries & Violence

Injuries include unintentional injuries (such as those caused by motor vehicle crashes and fires) and intentional injuries (violence and suicide).

- An injury is defined as “unintentional or intentional damage to the body resulting from acute exposure to thermal, mechanical, electrical, or chemical energy or from the absence of such essentials as heat or oxygen.”¹
- Injuries are not accidents. They can be prevented by changing the environment, individual behavior, products, social norms, legislation, and governmental and institutional policy.
- Injuries are the leading cause of death and disability for people aged 1 to 34 years in the United States.²
- Injuries requiring medical attention, or resulting in restricted activity, affect more than 20 million children and adolescents (250 per 1,000 persons) and cost \$17 billion annually for medical treatment.³
- Violence is the “threatened or actual use of physical force or power against another person, against oneself, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, or deprivation.”⁴

Leading Causes of Injury Mortality and Morbidity Among Children and Adolescents

- Two-thirds of all deaths among children and adolescents aged 5-19 years result from injury-related causes: 32% from motor vehicle injuries (occupants and pedestrians combined), 14% from all other unintentional injuries, 11% from homicides, and 9% from suicides.⁵

Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries

- Among children and adolescents aged 5 to 19 years, 70% of unintentional injury deaths are due to motor vehicle crashes.⁵
- Traffic-related injuries also include those sustained while walking, riding a bicycle, or riding a motorcycle. Among bicycle-related deaths, 83% are caused by collisions with motor vehicles.⁵

**Five Leading Causes of Death and Number of Deaths
United States, 2001, Ages 5-19**

Rank	Ages 5-9	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-19
1	Unintentional Injury 1,283	Unintentional Injury 1,553	Unintentional Injury 6,646
2	Malignant Neoplasms 493	Malignant Neoplasms 515	Homicide 1,899
3	Congenital Anomalies 182	Suicide 272	Suicide 1,611
4	Homicide 137	Congenital Anomalies 194	Malignant Neoplasms 732
5	Heart Disease 98	Homicide 189	Heart Disease 347

Source: CDC National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics System



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Violence

- In the United States, minority males bear most of the burden of homicide victimization. In 2001, among males aged 15 to 19 years, the homicide rate was 3.9 per 100,000 among whites; 6.9 per 100,000 among Asian/Pacific Islanders; 15.8 per 100,000 among American Indian/Alaskan Natives; 23.8 per 100,000 among Hispanics; and 59.9 per 100,000 among Blacks.⁵
- In 2003, 17% of high school students considered suicide, and 17% made plans to attempt suicide in the previous year.⁶
- The United States child homicide rate, 2.6 per 100,000 for children less than 15 years of age, is five times greater than the combined rate of 25 other industrialized countries.⁷
- An estimated 302,100 women and 92,700 men are forcibly raped each year in the United States. More than half (54%) of the female rape victims were less than 18 years of age, and 22% were less than 12 years of age when they were first raped.⁸

Context of Injury Occurrence

- Approximately 4 million children and adolescents are injured at school per year.³
- More than 1 million serious sports-related injuries occur annually to adolescents aged 10-17 years.⁹
- Firearms are the mechanism of injury in approximately 77% of homicides and 49% of suicides among children and adolescents aged 5-19 years.⁵
- From 1997 to 2002, 9,622 child passengers aged 0 to 14 years died in motor vehicle crashes. Of these children, 2,335 (24%) were killed in crashes involving drinking drivers, and 68% of the deaths occurred while the child was riding with the drinking driver.¹⁰

Five Leading Causes of Injury Death and Number of Injury Deaths United States, 2001, Ages 5-19

Rank	Ages 5-9	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-19
1	Motor Vehicle 660	Motor Vehicle 884	Motor Vehicle 5,106
2	Drowning 168	Suicide 272	Homicide 1,899
3	Fire/Burn 164	Homicide 189	Suicide 1,611
4	Homicide 137	Drowning 165	Poisoning 406
5	Other Land Transport 48	Fire/Burn 88	Drowning 322

Source: CDC National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics System

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